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The Challenges of Starting Extension Work in New Areas

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For the purpose of this paper we will discuss three main phases of starting extension work in new areas. First will be a series of ten criteria or guides useful to consider in starting extension. Second will be a discussion of the problems facing Americans assisting other countries in starting extension. Last will be some thoughts on the problems faced by persons who study in America and return to their homelands to start or to work on programs called extension or community development.

CRITERIA IN STARTING EXTENSION

The criteria set forth here are not intended as a pattern to follow, but are to serve as reminders of important points that should not be overlooked.

There are several ways of organizing an extension service. Although there are great variations in extension organization in the United States, in all cases extension is part of a land-grant college or university. In other countries the variation is infinitely greater. In some countries extension is attached to the governmental ministry of agriculture; in others it is attached to the colleges. There are advantages in each case, depending on the government and other existing conditions. We like the United States system because extension is coordinated with research and teaching. When the service is carried out by national ministries, it is very difficult to have well qualified specialists, and the specialists often become involved in regulatory and other work that detracts from their service. The important thing is to realize that there are other ways than those we have in the United States.

It is important to adapt the organization to the needs of the country. When we set up a mission we have in mind the way we do things in the United States. The mission is organized along departmental lines, with a health officer, educational officers, agricultural officers, and other

specialists. These people more or less assume our way is the way they should operate. There are too many places, in my opinion, where extension work has been set as it exists in the United States. It was easier and quicker to follow our methods than to study the culture, educational system, government, the needs of the people, and progress in the country, and then to determine what kind of extension organization was needed. I am afraid we have used too little of our United States experience and too many United States patterns in helping establish new systems.

Organization cannot correct all inherent weaknesses. In the United States we have an idea that money and organization will do everything. If we get into trouble or there is an emergency, Congress immediately starts to appropriate money. If we have a job to do, we immediately start to organize; we set up a committee. Organization is all right, but we forget sometimes that it is dependent upon a great many things. Foremost among these is leadership. If you organize but have weak, incompetent or corrupt leadership, you are in difficulty. Organization cannot overcome a lack of research, a lack of ability to work with people, or lack of ability to understand or interest people.

Rural people must be interested in changes. There is no use in setting up an extension service to work with people if they do not want to be helped. Our first job then is to teach them what they need and work with them until they want what we think they need. Liberty Hyde Bailey said something like that in the early days. Suppose you find yourself in another culture, a region where the people are not interested in change. For example in the eastern part of Iran, in one of the finest agricultural provinces of the country, there is much absentee landlordism. There has been so much difficulty for the sharecroppers, so many centuries of dry, poor production and so many centuries of people living in little mud villages, that they now have only the bare essentials of life. To the helpless villagers, life seems hopeless; they have no decent drinking water and hardly ever a full stomach. These people just do not believe there can be anything better for them.

The first thing they need is not information about agriculture, but to realize that they really can be better off. Someone has to bring them some hope and inspiration, with a new vision and a little belief that there is something better they can reach. You can show them by demonstrations but you had better offer something additional. You have a spiritual problem and you must get beneath all the evidence of poverty and reach the mind and the heart of man himself. There is always a place to begin, sometimes a long way from wheat, or pigs, or potatoes. There is always a spark of interest among parents about the welfare and health of their children.

There are people who are not moved by the economic and profit motive. They want to do things certain ways because of superstition, religion, custom or culture, and they are not interested in changes. Before you can change the agriculture and set up extension as you would like to see it, the people must be interested in what you have to offer. To put it another way, you must offer them what they want.

A definite system of recruiting and training is essential from the start. We have illustrations of extension services that have been in operation for some time, yet were started with no training programs. It is important to recruit and train right from the start; in many countries you cannot be sure you can take graduates of agricultural colleges and make extension workers of them. You may be surprised to find that a high percentage of the men who go to these colleges are city bred, the sons of landowners or of other wealthy persons. Few of them come from the villages or know and love the villages. In most countries where we will be starting extension work, agriculture has been underdeveloped for centuries, and the farmer and agriculture have been degraded. Farming is the lowest social status vocation. Extension must help place students in the colleges with farm or rural backgrounds. Men are needed in extension who love the village, understand it, and want to go back to it. They must first understand themselves, their lives, and life about them, and see in agriculture a scientific profession and a dignified way to help their fellow countrymen. They must feel they do not need to wear a white shirt and carry a briefcase to have prestige. You must do a lot more than just find an agriculturist or train a technical man. You must make them develop a philosophy of service.

We must anticipate problems of training extension workers. There are seven problems that may be encountered in training, and not all of them are with the workers.

1. American advisers may be one of your problems. Too much advice becomes criticism. The advisers should have a comprehensive view of things. They must be willing to take the time to study the culture, history, and background of the country so they do not give a lot of unnecessary advice about procedure when they should be concentrating on overall principles.

2. Cultural considerations must be studied not only by the outside advisers, but by the local people themselves. It is surprising to learn how little some people know about the different cultural groups, social strata, economic conditions, and tribal and regional differences in their own country. If local technicians are sometimes unqualified to judge their own people, certainly an outsider must be careful in his judgments and always be alert to learn.

3. Educational methods in each country must be taken into account. In most underdeveloped countries students are expected to memorize big chunks of a textbook and to be able to repeat it back to the teacher. It is difficult for the students to discuss practical problems. They have not grown up knowing how to analyze and attack actual situations. In extension teaching it is very difficult for them to relate principles and guides to specific examples. Sometimes they will become familiar with principles, but revert to their old habits when on their own. This is especially true among village workers in relating democratic processes to extension.

4. The relationship of manual labor to education is often misunderstood. This is the white collar problem where professional people are not willing to work with their hands and have no conception of the dignity of labor.

5. In extension training there is a definite need for job analysis. There should be a careful examination of the various extension jobs, a real look at the people you will be training, and an effort made to bring the two together.

6. Teaching program planning is another problem in extension training. Soon after you arrive in another country you can arrange for instruction in visual aids, in mass media, in report writing, and other similar types of work. But how do you teach people to work with villagers and how do you get them involved with program determination? Extension supervisors will tell you how they think it is being done but you will find something entirely different when you talk with the villagers. The local level worker knows and can tell you what the supervisor told him to do about programming, but what you see does not look as it should. A supervisor will find that a close working relationship is needed between him and the local level workers, and the responsibility to start it and maintain it is on him.

7. One of the forces holding back extension in a new area is the lack of teaching materials. In most underdeveloped areas the extension people must be taught how to use and make teaching aids from everyday materials when it is not practical to order them already made.

We must make provision for a variety of differences in cultural advance in different parts of the country. We find in many countries that farming is done in ways ranging from the most primitive to the most scientific. In addition to the differences in farming, a large number of dialects of the language may be used. There will be differences based on whether the farmers own their land or are renters or sharecroppers. A small sharecropper and a big landowner do not have the same attitude

about the profit motive. Their reactions to the agent's suggestions will be very different.

It is important to have projects of two kinds, those that give quick results, and those that require long continued effort to show results. People generally look for quick returns for their effort. Some of the most popular extension projects in recent years have been DDT fly control, culling chickens, and tree pruning. It is easy to teach such simple practices and they all give quick satisfaction. It is important, however, to move on to more difficult problems as soon as you have gained the confidence of the village people. Such projects as crop rotation, seed variety demonstrations, and fertilizer tests may take a full year to show results. A still longer time is required to show results from the use of better cockerels, bulls, or foundation stock. Both kinds of projects should be included in a new extension program. Satisfaction is essential to insure continued interest.

We must work through existing organizations as far as possible. There seems to be a fear of working with other organizations. What is community development? What is the relationship between community development and extension? Community development is a total approach to village problems, requiring coordination of all resources and existing organizations and institutions. Community development, of which extension may be an integral part, has to do with health, education, public roads, wells, local government, and other things. Using existing groups within culture, and using local leaders is much better than trying to create new organizations. Let us be sure we work with all the organizations we possibly can before we think of setting up new ones.

We must encourage stronger local self-government. There is a definite relationship between the development of people economically and agriculturally and their ability to govern themselves. You cannot go into a country and establish an extension service based on the development of people and their taking the initiative to help themselves if they have never done it before. Most people are told what to do from childhood, families are told what to do, and the government is authoritarian and highly centralized. These people have never had a chance to stand up and say what they think. Until the people can say for themselves, "this is what we want to do," we are not helping to build local self-government. As long as the villagers—the small folks—have no voice in local government and are not represented in national government, the development of extension, the most democratic of all institutions, is hampered.

PROBLEMS FACING AMERICANS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Under the threat of oversimplification we will discuss two major groups of problems the American will encounter overseas. These are directly connected with living and working in a foreign country.

Living Abroad Successfully

An American overseas must soon decide where he and his family will live. Technicians with our agencies stationed in capitals or other large cities usually live in private separate houses made available by the agencies. In smaller cities, away from seats of government, the Americans can stay in hotels, boarding houses, or government owned billets. If single the American can live with a local family.

If you live with the armed forces, missionaries, British, or any separate group, you will be partially associated with them in the minds of local people. Hotels are neutral ground; so is your own apartment or rented house. Sometimes you have the chance to live on a school or embassy compound, but you will learn more about the country if you live in a residential neighborhood that seems passable to your standards. Having servants and a swimming pool will only brand you as a well-to-do person, which you will be. But one wild party will brand you as a wasteful American, something that smears all Americans and takes a long time to live down.

The wife of any man in a foreign country may become lonesome and frustrated unless she has some consuming interest or work that takes her out of the house. Without a deliberately planned interest, she may become a prisoner behind brick walls. There are always language and cultural studies, social service, and hobbies. Shopping does not count. The sight of Americans spending their filthy money never created admiration in anyone, even in the merchant who likes to see us coming, but knows what fools we are.

In your private life, be your best self. Go to church on *your* Sunday, when you *can*; there will be many times when you cannot. Take care of your property, and do not keep large sums of money in the house. If you are robbed it makes you angry at everyone. Subscribe to several good American magazines and give them away when you are through with them.

Working Abroad Successfully

Get the overall picture. Try to learn as quickly as possible what your organization is trying to do in the country, its main objectives, principle projects, and how this fits into the local government and social organiza-

tion. Then, orient yourself in your own job and division of the mission. Find out what the big priorities are, get the timetable for expected completion of various jobs. Know how other projects, such as power and industry, affect the rural problem.

Expect to be confused. If you do not feel confused for a while by all the new names, scenes, things, foods, persons, and problems, then you are too sure of yourself and had better take another look.

Have a philosophy of collaboration. Make up your mind from the start that you will be one American who is going to work *with* the people and not *over* or *on* them. Make a firm resolution to *use local experts* and local institutions. There probably will be plenty of pressure to create new organizations. Resolve to build services that will be related to the needs of the people and that they can carry. The best way is to start helping the best men to do a better job where they are. Build these men up in their present positions, and help the existing leaders. Make a program of disinterested service your main concern. A disinterested program is *for them*, and *not for us* or our prestige.

Take enough time to do the job. Generally speaking, Americans must take a slower pace in other countries. After you have lived in a hot country, you will learn to take a midday siesta along with the local folks and you will be in better shape the next day.

One trouble with Uncle Sam's technical assistance work abroad in the past was that the money had to be spent *this year*. If it was not used, how could you expect another appropriation next year? This rush to show results was a source of constant friction within the country. Remember you are in the old world when you are not in the Americas. Where we speak of 100 years, they speak of 1,000 years. But they are not as slow as it seems. We may be trying to get them to do in a few weeks what took us years in the United States, or in one year what took us 30 years.

Do not get frustrated. For centuries in the older countries, whoever put his head above the others or assumed responsibility was a target for criticism and rough treatment. This has caused good men to move cautiously. A man has to check with his superior and in turn this superior has to check above him. Be sympathetic and understanding. Allow time for these processes. It is well enough to have a timetable and a plan, but if it gets broken or abandoned, be willing to make another cheerfully lest you become frustrated. If you get tense and start talking to yourself, it is time to let up the pressure.

Be a self-made coordinator. You do not need to wait for an official appointment from the head of the mission to be a coordinator. Just get

off your chair long enough to go talk to the fellow, in or out of your division, who is doing something related to your job. But more directly, get to know current national and international efforts that concern the rural village. In the end, all programs converge in the village. Places to look are your own government, cultural and commercial attaches, and United States Information Offices. Then take a look at the divisions of your own mission; you will find various services, projects, and plans that affect extension and many that are bound for the village. Know the United Nations resident representative, find out what personnel are at work and where. Trace down British, French or other national agencies, private foundations, schools, missionaries, and survey groups from different countries. Then last and most important, study the government of the country, its divisions, separate authorities, regional, and local village, to be able to talk intelligently about it. With this information, try to coordinate what you do in the most effective manner for lasting results. A coordinator is a person with a broad outlook. Do not get wrapped up with the idea that Uncle Sam is the only instrumentality for good.

Supplies are hard to get. Plan your work on what will actually be available or can be made available for villagers. Do not demonstrate something the villagers cannot hope to buy or secure in some way.

Try to develop people. Have a local counterpart if possible. Think of the men who have responsibility and see how you can build them up. Give them all the credit for results. You will get yours without trying. Try to find the coming leaders. If available, use fellowships and scholarships to the United States to help train and develop these men. The people who come to you for help in getting fellowships may not be the ones who need it. Often they are looking for your influence rather than your advice. A rich man's daughter who wants to study home economics in the United States is not likely to set foot in a rural village. Do not put all your work on the political group that is in. They may be out someday. Try to work with those least affected by political upheavals. In most countries, there is a level just below the top, which compares to our civil service, where the real work is done and where training is well used.

Remember some little things that count. Be careful about expressing a hope, a possibility, or a plan. It is often mistaken for a promise, and honestly so, because of language difficulties. A broken promise causes trouble and ill will. Never forget the problem of communication. Words, words, words—these are the only bridge from your mind to the other fellow's, and until you know the language expertly, you may be conveying the wrong idea. Within the country your interpreters may disagree on words to use in dealing with village people. From the start, try to learn

the conversational language of the country. If you try, and make mistakes, people will laugh *with* you; but if you do not *try*, they might hate you for it. Remember, that just because almost everything you see or contact is different from your homeland, it is not inferior. In fact it may prove superior, especially for the purpose and the place.

PROBLEMS AFTER EDUCATION IN AMERICA AND RETURN TO HOMELAND

Let us assume from the start that we are talking about you, a mature individual who was educated through college in your own country, who holds a position of responsibility to which you will return. This is to distinguish you from other persons who have left their countries for four years or more and have been educated away from their people. You have the advantage of already having been accepted by your people as a qualified professional member of your culture. Let us also assume that you may take graduate work at an American university with the same major and minor subjects available to the Americans. In extension education, you will have to work harder at it than Americans who grew up with it. If possible, you should travel in several states observing types of agriculture and variations in extension programs. This will help you to discard that which you feel does not apply to your own country.

While you are in the United States, you should try to relate your entire experience to your home country. You, better than anyone here, know the problems you will face and the persons in authority who must be converted to your way of thinking. You must be prepared to explain and defend this new work Americans call extension; therefore you must find and use words in your own language that will express the right meanings.

As a visitor and student in America you have learned many things. Some philosophical ideas, some principles of education, some techniques of teaching, some organizational tricks, some skills, some very small but helpful suggestions, some rank prejudices, and a great mass of useless information. It is very important to begin sorting and classifying your thoughts. Just as we have levels of extension objectives, you have levels of importance in your store of knowledge. Sort them out and use the big ideas in talking to the big men. Use philosophical ideas and points of view in talking to top officials who determine policy. Use principles of education in talking to specialists. Reserve the small things for detailed instruction. Do not worry about a lot of things you are forgetting because they probably are not worth remembering.

The big job is the development of a satisfying rural life in your country. This will require a long time to achieve. A rural culture developed by and for rural people, a rural life of which country folks are proud and to which young educated men and women will return willingly, is a revolutionary ideal. You may not live to see it, because it requires changes in viewpoint of government, industry, education, social values and in fact the whole system of values in national life. At times you will feel like a prophet crying in the wilderness, but you will find many friends in time.

There is a new freedom of thought abroad in the world, and we are all part of a great social revolution. Try to utilize and mold the best aspects of it in your country. People are ready to learn any new approach to their own welfare if it is presented properly. In many countries the traditional culture is changing so fast that people will be left in a vacuum at times. By demonstration of scientific practices, you can disperse superstitions. These are sometimes related to religious and racial customs that have given security to the poverty stricken villager. While you shake his faith in these old ways, you must encourage him, and give him hope and confidence that he can have a better life.

Too much exposure to western ways with its speed, organization, and aggressive plans may make you overcritical of your own countrymen. If you let this happen, you will become useless. You should keep an attitude of helpfulness, and bring constructive ideas to your people that will improve the way they live. Cling to the best in your own culture. Do not adopt western prejudices and ideas that have no place in the presence of time tested virtues of long standing in your homeland. Distinguish between principles and prejudices. "All that glitters is not gold," is an old English saying, and we might add, it is quite apt to be plastic in the United States.

Finally, let me suggest that you reduce your burden to several smaller packages. You will probably go home overburdened with the load of your responsibility. I have spoken of sorting your ideas to different levels; now I am suggesting you do the same in your job. Break it into a number of parts you can carry, one at a time. Having your job broken into integral parts allow you to give some of your responsibilities to others, and you can keep looking for qualified persons to develop professionally. Some examples of these separate jobs are developing training programs, selecting personnel, improving organization, building confidence and public relations, training and using specialists, improving supervision, getting financial support, administering finances and accounting, reporting and evaluating, and supporting extension work with research.

COMPARATIVE EXTENSION PUBLICATIONS RELEASED TO DATE

- No. 1 **A Bibliography on Comparative Extension Education.** *March 1958.* (Out of print).
- No. 2 **Varieties of Extension Education and Community Development.** *December 1958.*
- No. 3 **Developing Professional Leadership in Extension Education.** *May 1958.* (Out of print).
- No. 4 **A Collection of Principles and Guides.** *July 1958.*
- No. 5 **Differences Between Extension Education and Community Development.** *October 1958.*
- No. 6 **The Impact of Religion on Cultural Change.** *October 1958.*
- No. 7 **The United States Cooperative Extension Service.** *November 1958.* (Out of print).
- No. 8 **National Extension Services of Selected Countries in the Americas.** *February 1959.*
- No. 9 **The United States and the Economically Underdeveloped Countries.** *March 1959.*
- No. 10 **The Role of the New York State College of Agriculture as Part of a Land-Grant Institution.** *June 1959.*

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